



# Department of Health

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Subject: NYSDOH Guidance for use of Face Masks and Face Coverings in Healthcare Facilities

Dear Chief Executive Officers and Administrators:

This New York State Department of Health correspondence is applicable to all healthcare settings including hospitals, nursing homes, home healthcare and hospice agencies, diagnostic and treatment centers, physician offices, dental offices, local health departments, and office-based surgery practices (adult care facilities are addressed on page 2 of this letter). The purpose of this advisory is to provide updated recommendations for the use of masks and face coverings that all healthcare settings in New York should follow during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The New York State Department of Health affirms the importance of non-pharmacological infection prevention strategies in health care settings such as appropriate usage of well-fitting face masks. This is a vital infection prevention strategy with a sound evidence base and represents a clear infection prevention standard.

This advisory, effective February 12, 2023, **supersedes** all previous NYSDOH guidance, recommendations, and requirements pertaining to the use of face masks and face coverings for COVID-19-related source control in healthcare facilities in New York. This advisory does not affect any requirements under the [Regulation for Prevention of Influenza Transmission by Healthcare and Residential Facility and Agency Personnel](#).

All **personnel**, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status, in a healthcare setting (i.e., facilities or entities regulated under **Articles 28, 36, and 40** of the Public Health Law) should wear an appropriate face mask according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#).

The current CDC recommendations apply regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status and are based on [Transmission Levels](#), not on [COVID-19 Community Levels](#). The above CDC recommendations also apply to all **visitors** two years of age and older and able to medically tolerate a face covering/mask.

"Personnel" above means all persons employed or affiliated with a healthcare or residential facility or agency, whether paid or unpaid, including, but not limited to employees, members of the medical and nursing staff, contract staff, students, and volunteers, who engage in activities such that if they were infected with SARS-CoV-2, they could potentially expose patients or residents to the virus.

Note that this definition is the same as that for influenza found in the [Regulation for Prevention of Influenza Transmission by Healthcare and Residential Facility and Agency Personnel](#). The details of which individuals are included as "personnel," along with certain reasonable and necessary exceptions, are also equivalent to those in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for the influenza-related masking requirement; however, other elements of the influenza-related masking requirement, such as the influenza-related vaccination component, the prevalence declaration, and the exclusion of visitors, are not applicable to the COVID-19-related masking recommendations.

Facilities or entities regulated under **Articles 28, 36, and 40** should develop and implement policies for personnel and visitor masking based on the CDC and NYSDOH recommendations above. Facility policies should be at least as strict as CDC recommendations and may be stricter at the discretion of the facility.

Healthcare facilities not regulated under **Articles 28, 36, or 40** and private medical and dental practices should strongly consider adhering to these COVID-19 infection prevention and control recommendations. **Facilities and programs operating under the authority of another State agency should follow the masking requirements of that agency.** Adult care facilities (ACFs) should follow [CDC community guidance](#) and [CDC guidance for congregate living settings](#).

In addition to these masking recommendations, healthcare facilities are reminded of the importance of following other infection prevention and control recommendations related to COVID-19 and the continuing obligation for nursing homes and ACFs (and recommendation for other facilities) to encourage residents and staff to receive all recommended vaccinations.

For questions, please write to [icp@health.ny.gov](mailto:icp@health.ny.gov) (hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic and treatment centers), [bcdc@health.ny.gov](mailto:bcdc@health.ny.gov) (for all other healthcare settings), [covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov), [covidadultcareinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidadultcareinfo@health.ny.gov), or [covidhomecareinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidhomecareinfo@health.ny.gov).

Sincerely,



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